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ABSTRACT

A 1966 study of the Kansas secondary schools sought to determine the prevailing conditions in the language arts classrooms in the state and the personal qualifications of the state's 1,656 language arts teachers. Findings revealed that (1) more than half of the language arts teachers were teaching in schools with fewer than 500 students, (2) although all of the state's language arts teachers had Bachelor's degrees, less than one-fourth of them held Master's degrees, and (3) the language arts teacher's average years of experience were 11.09 years; his average salary was $1200 behind the national average; and his average class load was four language arts classes daily with approximately 20 students enrolled in each class. Although other factors work against a student's receiving a quality secondary school education in the language arts, the most immediate need indicated by this study was the consolidation of the smallest schools. (JB)

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The Language Arts Teacher in Kansas*

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Very little is actually known about Kansas language arts teachers, either as individuals or as a group. Inasmuch as the most recent comprehensive survey was conducted over thirteen years ago, the current study was undertaken in the spring of 1966 for the purpose of obtaining information concerning (1) the personal qualification of the language arts teacher, and (2) prevailing conditions in language arts classrooms. All data used in this study was obtained from the Principals' Organization Reports on file in the office of Elementary and Secondary School Accreditation, State Department of Public Instruction, Topeka. Information was compiled and analyzed for the 1656 teachers assigned to one or more language arts classes (English, speech, or journalism) on the secondary level in both public and non-public schools in Kansas.

Findings Concerning the Teacher

It was found that more than one-half of the 1656 Language Arts teachers in Kansas teach in schools with an enrollment of less than 500 pupils, while approximately one-fourth teach in schools of less than 100 pupils. The exact breakdown of enrollment categories and number of teachers per category as used in this study appears in Table 1.

Table 1

Number of Language Arts Teachers in Kansas Public and Non-Public Secondary Schools Classified According to Size of School

Size of School		Public		Non-Public		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
I	0- 99	361	23.66	21	16.15	382	23.07
II	100- 299	424	27.79	46	35.38	470	28.38
III	300- 499	161	10.55	34	26.15	195	11.78
IV	500- 999	211	13.83	16	12.31	227	13.71
V	1000-1999	181	11.86	13	10.00	194	11.71
VI	2000-over	188	12.32	....	.....	188	11.35
Total		1526	100.00	130	100.00	1656	100.00

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It was also found that only three out of ten language arts teachers in Kansas are male and that the lowest percentage of males occurs in schools of less than 100 enrollment.

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Academic Degrees. It is generally agreed that a good index of a teacher's competency is the number of degrees that he has earned. While it appears that all language arts teachers in Kansas have earned at least a Bachelor's degree in some field (not necessarily the language arts), it was shown that only 22 per cent of the public school teachers have earned a Master's degree, compared to 41 per cent of the non-public school teachers. Overall, about 24 per cent of all secondary language arts teachers in Kansas have a Master's degree, which represents an approximate five per cent decline since the Davidson study completed in 1953.[1]

In general, the percentage of language arts teachers holding Master's degrees increases with school size. The percentages range from 13.07 per cent in Class I (see Table 1) to 50.53 per cent in Class VI. Almost one-third of all language arts teachers in Kansas who have Master's degrees are currently teaching in the largest schools (Class VI), compared to Class I which employs only 12 per cent of all teachers with Master's degrees.

It was also found that the larger schools employed teachers who have earned their degrees more recently than teachers in the smaller schools. For example, approximately 43 per cent of the language arts teachers who earned their last degree in the 1920's are currently teaching in Class I schools, compared to four per cent in Class VI schools. An interpretation of the significance of this finding is left to the reader.

Academic Preparation. The number of credit hours a teacher has accumulated in his field, as well as in the particular subject or subjects he is teaching, should be considered in a discussion of teacher competency. In general, it was found that as school size increases teacher preparation in terms of number of credit hours in the language arts also increases. This relationship is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2 reveals some interesting facts concerning teacher preparation in the various language arts in public schools. English teachers are obviously the best prepared, with an overall average of 36.52 semester hours in English courses. Speech teachers are next, with an overall average 25.33 semester hours in speech courses. Journalism teachers are the least well-prepared, with an average of only 14.75 semester hours in journalism courses. Also, it is strikingly evident that the academic preparation of teachers in all three subjects increases with school size.

Statistics such as those presented above are made more meaningful when presented in an objective context. For example, the teacher preparation requirement for teaching English in Kansas secondary schools is 24 semester hours. If this were accepted as the standard for each subject, then 32 per cent of the English teachers, 63 per cent of the speech teachers, and 88 per cent of the journalism teachers in Kansas would be considered inadequately prepared

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1. Gene E. Davidson. "The Teaching Load of English Teachers in Kansas." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Kansas, Lawrence, 1953. p. 61.

TABLE 2

Average Number of Academic Hours in Language Arts, English, Speech, and Journalism Earned by Language Arts Teachers in Kansas Public and Non-Public Secondary Schools

	Language Arts		English		Speech		Journalism	
Class	Public	Non-Public	Public	Non-Public	Public	Non-Public	Public	Non-Public
I	34.33	35.84	26.92	29.14	14.82	....	10.56	....
II	42.52	40.95	32.46	35.74	19.43	....	8.58	....
III	50.77	45.80	36.20	35.63	21.95	....	10.65	....
IV	50.03	46.85	38.83	41.58	30.00	....	15.35	....
V	50.80	56.23	38.60	42.38	31.29	....	22.67	....
VI	57.88	.....	46.09	.....	34.50	....	20.67	....
Means	47.72	45.13	36.52	36.89	25.33	....	14.75	....

to teach. Nevertheless, the average language arts teacher in Kansas has approximately 10 more semester hours in English, and 14 more semester hours in the language arts than he had a decade ago.[2]

Experience. The average language arts teacher in Kansas public secondary schools has had 11.09 years of experience. This average does not vary by more than one year in any of the classes. The non-public teachers average 11.65 years of experience, with an average of approximately 18 years in schools of less than 500 enrollment, and approximately seven years in the larger schools.

Salary. The mode, mean, and median salary for all language arts teachers in Kansas public schools falls within the $5,000-5,999 per year bracket. As school size increases, salaries also increase. In Class I, more than 34 per cent of all the public language arts teachers receive less than $5,000 per year, whereas in Class VI, slightly over two per cent earn less than $5,000 per year. On the other hand, approximately eight per cent of Class I teachers earn more than $6,000 per year, compared to slightly over 58 per cent of Class VI teachers. At the top of the salary scale, less than two per cent of the teachers in Class I earn more than $7,000 per year, whereas over 32 per cent in Class VI earn more than that amount. The mean salary for all public language arts teachers is $5,754 per year, ranging from $5,193 in Class I to $6,754 in Class VI.

It is interesting to note how salaries in Kansas compare to those of other states, as well as nationally. The state of Kansas ranks 29th nationally in terms of salary paid to secondary school teachers (and 45th nationally in state aid to education). The estimated average annual income of secondary school teachers in the United States for 1965-66 is $6,768, compared to $5,607 for Kansas (a

2. Donald Davis. "A Study of the Preparation of Teachers of English in Kansas High Schools." Unpublished report based on Principals' Organization Reports for the 1955-56 school year, 29 pp.

"deficit" of $1,161 per year). In 1953-54, the national average was $4,066, compared to $3,070 for Kansas (a "deficit" of $996 per year).

Findings Concerning the Classroom

Statistics concerning the language arts classroom and teacher load are presented in Table 3 in three categories: number of classes per teacher, number of students per teacher, and number of students per class.

Table 3

Average Number of Language Arts Classes and Students per Teacher, and Average Number of Students per Language Arts Class in Kansas Public and Non-Public Secondary Schools

	Classes/Teacher		Students/Teacher		Students/Class	
Class	Public	Non-Public	Public	Non-Public	Public	Non-Public
I	3.24	2.54	39.72	43.31	12.26	17.05
II	3.43	3.07	71.10	58.33	20.73	19.00
III	4.01	3.29	88.40	84.86	22.05	25.79
IV	4.48	3.20	86.00	95.87	19.20	29.96
V	5.11	4.00	100.89	123.46	19.74	30.87
VI	4.41	....	113.45	.....	27.40	.....
Means	4.11	3.22	83.26	81.17	20.23	24.53

From Table 3, it is evident that the average language arts teacher in the public schools has approximately four language arts classes a day, which average about 20 students per class for a total of approximately 80 students. Averages can be misleading, however, as seen in the class breakdown. The teachers in Class VI schools have classes which are more than twice as large, and have nearly three times the total number of language arts students when compared to Class I teachers. Thus, the students in the smaller schools may have the advantage of more personalized instruction, although the taxpayer has the disadvantage of paying for the inefficient use of the teacher's time in undersized classes.

Implications

In almost every category the results of this study have indicated a wide schism between the small rural high school and the large urban, or suburban, high school. In general, the small schools need what the large ones already have—teachers with good backgrounds in their subject areas, higher salaries, more Master's degrees, etc. This is not meant to imply, however, that conditions in even the largest schools are not in need of considerable improvement, as can be shown by comparison with national statistics. At any rate, it would appear that the most immediate need is the elimination of the smallest schools.

But how small is too small? Dr. James B. Conant has stated that:

> The enrollment of many American public high schools is too small to allow a diversified curriculum except at exorbitant expense. The prevalence of such high schools—those with graduating classes of less than one hundred students—constitutes one of the serious obstacles to good secondary education throughout most of the United States.[3]

In Kansas, approximately one-half of all the language arts teachers are employed in such schools. At the present time, Kansas is making a concerted effort to eliminate the small school, which should alleviate this problem considerably. The basic argument favoring unification in Kansas is thus supported by the findings of this study. However, unification and larger schools won't suffice to solve all problems for the Kansas language arts teacher. If Kansans really want their sons and daughters to receive a quality education, they are going to have to pay for it, which means increased state aid to education, as well as higher salaries to keep Kansas-educated teachers in education and in Kansas.

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3. James B. Conant. *The American High School Today*. McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York, 1959. p. 77.